POLYXENA.

BRITISH MUSEUM

Dramatis Perſonæ.

AGAMEMNON.

ULYSSES.

CALCHAS.

MENELAUS.

PYRRHUS.

HECUBA.

POLYXENA.

CASSANDRA.

TROJAN CAPTIVES.

POLYXENA.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

CALCHAS, ULYSSES.

ULYSSES.

AT length, my friend, at length the fav'ring Gods
Diſpenſe propitious gales. Our longing eyes
May yet behold once more their native land.

CALCHAS.

But wherefore the delay? Now when our ſails
Unfurl'd, and fluttering to the breeze, upbraid
The tardy mariner, why does Agamemnon
Neglect the proffer'd bounty of the Gods?
Dark diſcontent frowns on each Grecian brow,
And growing murmurs ſpread on every ſide.

ULYSSES.

Oh Calchas, 'tis an honeſt indignation,
Nor would I check its courſe. Yes, let the tempeſt
Riſe; and oh guide its fury, Argive Juno.
I tell thee, Calchas, all our ten years toil
Was vain: in vain the mighty ſon of Peleus
Fell, ſelf-devoted, for the weal of Greece.
Troy ſtill ſurvives, and the prophetic maid,
Caſſandra, reigns ſupreme. Greece, conqu'ring Greece,
Stoops to her ſway; and he, the king of kings,
Is a weak woman's ſlave.

CALCHAS.

Oh king of Ithaca,
With grief I have beheld our General's weakneſs.
Of Agamemnon, prudent, wiſe, and valiant,
The common father of aſſembled Greece,
And ſworn the foe of Troy, no trace remains.
Alas! how chang'd from him, whom Aulis ſaw
Greatly triumphant o'er reluctant nature;
Who to a Father's tender name preferr'd
A Patriot's manly feelings. Much I fear
The frantic multitude—

ULYSSES.

Their headlong fury
Might in one common fate involve their leaders,
The guiltleſs with the guilty. We are urg'd

By

By ſtrong neceſſity of ſelf-defence,
And by the nobleſt motive, that can fire
The breaſt of mortal man, our country's welfare,
To teach the gathering tempeſt where to fall.
When the ſwift hours bring death and vengeance on,
And the loud ruin thunders in his ears,
He may ſhake off this dream of ſhameful pleaſure,
And wake once more to honour, and to glory.

CALCHAS.

Forgive me, wiſe Ulyſſes, if I cannot
Approve what you adviſe. You know the king
Is reſolute of ſoul, nor will be mov'd
By the wild clamours of a lawleſs rabble;
And, long accuſtom'd to obey and fear him,
The lowdeſt brawler, when he frowns, will tremble.
Then will the blow we aim'd at Agamemnon
Recoil upon ourſelves.

ULYSSES.

Diſmiſs thy fears,
The Gods are with us, and the mighty dead
Reviſit earth, to aid our holy purpoſe.
Know then, that while, (as is my wont) laſt night,
Muſing I wander'd by the ſea-beat ſhore,
Near where the ſepulchre of great Achilles
Lifts its high head to heaven, a ſudden light
Flaſh'd on my eyes, and clad in radiant arms
The hero roſe confeſt. Frowning he ſtood,

And ſhook his threat'ning lance; then with loud voice,
And terrible, while icy fear ſhot through my veins,
" Where is your courſe directed o'er the main,
Ye ſons of Greece, while my neglected tomb
Unhonour'd ſtands?" then vaniſh'd into air.

CALCHAS.

You much amaze me!

ULYSSES.

Mark my words in ſilence.
Should we unfurl our impious ſails, and catch
The riſing gales, while, unappeas'd, the ſpirit
Of the offended hero hovers o'er us,
Greece might for ever periſh: the juſt Gods
Mark the ungrateful head for heavieſt vengeance.

CALCHAS.

I cannot penetrate thy purpoſe; hecatombs
Have fall'n already; and ſhould we renew
Our off'rings, could they ſhake the monarch's ſoul?

ULYSSES.

Not the dull ox's blood, which daily ſtreams
On ſepulchres of vulgar dead, befits
The might of Peleus' ſon. Some captive virgin—

CALCHAS.

Caſſandra?

ULYSSES.

Fitter victims may be found.
Thou know'ſt Polyxena, the youngeſt hope

Of

Of Priam's houſe, was deſtin'd to his bed.
The nuptials were prepar'd, thoſe fatal nuptials
Which ſaw the mightieſt of mankind expire;
Fall by a coward's hand. By guile he fell,
At once of life defrauded, and the maid.
And now the injur'd hero's awful ſhade
Demands his fair reward, his virgin bride.

CALCHAS.

Oft, by ſuch cauſes mov'd, the ſouls of men
Departed have forſaken the dark realm
Of Proſerpine, to taſte of purer air.

ULYSSES.

To vindicate the cauſe of injur'd Greece
Pelides came, ſent by the blue-eyed maid.
The people ſoon ſhall know their virtuous leader,
This idol, from whoſe dreadful frown they ſhrink;
Who for one ſmile, one glance from fair Caſſandra,
Barters the public welfare. I will rouſe
The ſleeping camp, and their indignant boſoms
Fire with the memory of their lov'd Achilles,
And the ſoft pleaſures of their native ſhore;
But thou ſhalt beſt, oh venerable Calchas,
Declare th' immortal dictates of the Gods,
Polyxena muſt die.

CALCHAS.

To Heaven's high will
Obedience muſt be paid; yet from the fate,

Th' untimely fate of this devoted virgin,
What hopes ſhall Greece derive of happier days?
Caſſandra will ſurvive.

ULYSSES.

To practiſe aught
Againſt her life were madneſs, and our zeal
Would thence be conſtrued into private malice.
The vulgar would applaud their own diſcernment,
And think it generous in them to defend
Their prince from the low arts of envy: ſo
Would our ſolicitude for what concerns
The good of common Greece be term'd. 'Tis therefore
The Gods, th' immortal Gods, to Greece propitious,
Diſpenſe their omens, and preſcribe our courſe.
The king, whoſe ſoul with abſolute dominion
Caſſandra rules, whate'er the general voice
Decree, will never ſacrifice her ſiſter.
'Twill then be plain, that all his ſmooth pretences,
Portentous dreams, and prodigies from Heaven,
Which to this hated ſhore ſo long have bound us,
Were mere devices to abuſe our faith,
And ſooth his Phrygian ſtrumpet into kindneſs.
His haughty ſpirit muſt at length ſubmit:
If not, he dreams in vain, th' incenſed people
Will brook him longer; Greece has other leaders.
And while our joyful eyes behold once more
Thoſe plains which gave us birth, our arms with rapture

Claſp

Claſp our long widow'd wives, our blooming children,
Here amid mould'ring ruins, fields diſpeopled,
Here let him wander with Caſſandra, lonely,
Abandon'd, ev'n by her he loves deſpis'd.

CALCHAS.

Oh may he wake to honour, and to virtue;
And by the nobleſt conqueſt, o'er himſelf,
Add luſtre to the fame of Troy's deſtroyer!

ULYSSES.

Prophetic be that wiſh; for believe me, Calchas,
I know, and I eſteem his generous nature.
Dear to Ulyſſes' ſoul is Agamemnon,
But dearer is his country; and if, loſt
To Greece, the king now lives but for Caſſandra;
If, urg'd by frenzy without bounds, he meditates
To bid wide-ruin'd Troy again aſpire,
And curſe with wars renew'd the groaning world;
He is my foe, the foe of Greece and virtue;
And though my friendſhip bleed, the patriot ſhall
The baſe betrayer of the public truſt
Purſue ev'n to the death.

CALCHAS.

Such dire neceſſity
May the juſt gods avert!

ULYSSES.

Truſt me, my Calchas,
'Tis ſome prophetic ſpirit fires my breaſt,

And

And tells me that they will. Our country's welfare,
Her honour is at ſtake. Our prudent counſels
Alone can ward the blow. I will convene
Th' aſſembly of the Greeks. Let no vain fears,
No womaniſh remorſe invade thy breaſt.
Heaven points the way. Our country calls us on,
And the great motive juſtifies the deed.

SCENE II.

CALCHAS ALONE.

Myſterious are the ways of Providence,
Above the feeble ken of human ſight.
The ſecret ſprings unknown, man ſees, ſurpriz'd,
Fair Order from Confuſion grow, and Good
From ſeeming Ill. Polyxena muſt die.
The blood of innocence muſt ſtain the altar,
And the poor mother weep her murther'd child.
Yet ſhall this be the ſource of bliſs to thouſands
Who now in exile languiſh. Nations hence
Shall date their ſafety, and behold the ſpark
Which might again light up the flames of war
Extinguiſh'd here for ever.

SCENE III.

CALCHAS, AGAMEMNON.

AGAMEMNON.

Calchas, I ſought thee. Tell me, reverend father,
(Since Heav'n has grac'd thy age with matchleſs wiſdom)
Whence is it that thoſe Greeks, whom love and awe
Long taught to bow to my ſuperior ſway,
Now dare to murmur, and diſpute my will?
Ungrateful men! is Aulis then forgot?
Oh Iphigenia, was thy innocent blood
Shed for a thankleſs race? Hard fate of princes,
Condemn'd to care, and toil, for others' good,
Yet envied, hated, fear'd, betray'd by all,
Malice their ſlighteſt failings ſwells to crimes,
And blots the memory of their public virtues.

CALCHAS.

Believe me, royal Sir, the prince who makes
His rule of government his people's welfare,
May mock the feeble rage of ſick'ning envy,
Not hated, not diſtruſted, not betray'd;
But prais'd, admir'd, obey'd, and lov'd by all.

AGAMEMNON.

AGAMEMNON.

'Tis well. It was not then the public welfare
That made my agonizing heart ſubmit
To ſacrifice my daughter. I reſign'd
The blooming beauties of my lov'd Chryſeïs
From any motive but the public good.
'Twas fear, perchance, and not my care for Greece
That bad me ſooth Pelides' inſolence,
And loſe the memory of my private wrongs.

CALCHAS.

Oh Agamemnon, Greece reſpects thy virtues,
And owns with grateful love her benefactor:
But now, when ev'ry breaſt is beating high
With hope, to view their native plains once more,
What wonder, if their paſſions ſwell to tempeſt,
And ſpurn at that authority, which ſtill,
Without a cauſe, delays their wiſh'd departure.

AGAMEMNON.

Without a cauſe! Art thou too leagu'd againſt me?
Does it become thy white and reverend age
To join in factious broils, and civil tumults?
Is then the ſtate of ſovereign power compell'd,
Whene'er the frantic multitude demand it,
T' unveil the ſecret motives of his conduct
To vulgar eyes? 'Twere fitter far for thee,
The miniſter of Heav'n, to teach obedience
Than bold rebellion 'gainſt thy ſovereign's power.

CALCHAS.

CALCHAS.

Reſpect, oh king, that Heaven which ſpeaks by me.
The Gods will point their vengeance at thy head,
If longer by Caſſandra's love ſeduc'd,——

AGAMEMNON.

Prophet of ill! hence, to the fools who truſt thee.
Thy lying oracles are void of terror
To Agamemnon's ſoul. I came to ſeek thee
To bid thee bend the fierce capricious people
To ſecond my deſires; and mark me, Calchas,
Upon thy life I charge thee, thou preſume not
To thwart my purpoſe. By the Gods I ſwear,
Th' immortal Gods, whoſe delegate I am,
Thy diſobedience ſhall be paid with death.
Go; be the victims ſlain, prepare thy omens,
Thoſe ſpecious tricks that cheat the gaping crowd,
And tell the Greeks that fate has fix'd them here.
The fair Caſſandra hither bends her ſteps.
Be gone; and henceforth better learn thy duty,
Leſt injur'd majeſty not always ſpare thee.

SCENE IV.

AGAMEMNON, CASSANDRA.

AGAMEMNON.

Oh royal maid, ſtill muſt the cloud of ſorrow
Hang on thy brow, and bathe thy cheek with tears?

Raiſe

Raiſe thy bright eyes, and bid theſe ruin'd plains,
Theſe plains that mourn with thee, once more look gay.

CASSANDRA.

Oh, Agamemnon, can a generous mind
Inſult the feelings of a wretch like me?
Have I not ſeen the fatal day of Troy?
Troy, built by hands divine, the nurſe of heroes;
Her temples ſink in flames, her matrons violated,
Her helpleſs infants daſh'd againſt the ground;
My friends, my brothers, my diſaſtrous father
Victims of ruthleſs war; myſelf a captive—

AGAMEMNON.

Oh ſpare ſo harſh a word, unjuſt Caſſandra;
We are not fierce barbarians, to wage war
With your defenceleſs ſex. We can reſpect
Your virtues, and lament for your misfortunes.
And let Caſſandra's ſelf bear witneſs for me,
That ever ſince the deſtiny of war
Gave thee to my protection, I have labour'd
By every art which fondeſt love could dictate,
To ſooth thy troubled ſoul, and calm thy fears.

CASSANDRA.

I feel, and own thy goodneſs, Agamemnon;
Yet can I never, never taſte of comfort,
While o'er my fallen country ruin ſits
Brooding, and withers every ſpringing joy.
Here, 'mid the tombs of my departed kindred,

(Which

(Which each revolving year that ſun ſhall ſee
Unhonour'd, unadorn'd, with flow'rs or victims)
Shall midnight wolves howl o'er the dreary waſte,
And ſhall I, wretch, meanwhile in Argos, Argos,
Whoſe glory riſes on my conquer'd country,
Unmindful of the love I bore them, yield
My ſoul to pleaſure, and unhallow'd bliſs?
Oh, I were loſt indeed to virtuous ſhame,
Could but ſo mean a thought find entrance here.

AGAMEMNON.

Alas! thy unavailing grief, Caſſandra,
Wakes not the aſhes of the dead to life;
They ſleep for ever in the ſilent grave.
Thee better fates attend; for thee, Caſſandra,
In long ſucceſſion bliſsful days ariſe.

CASSANDRA.

Alas! Caſſandra's portion is deſpair.

AGAMEMNON.

Far from thy breaſt ſuch gloomy thoughts be driv'n,
And open all thy ſoul to love and joy.

CASSANDRA.

Whom doſt thou bid me love? Oh horror, horror!

AGAMEMNON.

No vulgar ſuitor wooes thee; but a king,
Whom kings themſelves obey.

CASSANDRA.

CASSANDRA.

Oh royal Priam,
Where is thy empire now?

AGAMEMNON.

If what remains
Of Priam's royal houſe can claim thy care,
My ſuit ſhall not be vain. In me behold
A friend, as pow'rful as ſincere, whoſe arm
Shall with a brother's love protect Polyxena,
And ſooth the woes of aged Hecuba.
Oh then at length relent, be kind, and happy;
And in Mycenæ loſe the thoughts of Troy.

CASSANDRA.

Alas! can I find pleaſure in Mycenæ,
While Troy lies one wide heap of hopeleſs ruin?
Oh Ilium, oh my country! never, never
Shall my complaints have end; for thou art fall'n,
Alas! to riſe no more.

AGAMEMNON.

Reſtrain, Caſſandra,
Reſtrain theſe fond complaints.

CASSANDRA.

Oh Agamemnon,
If generous pity melt thee, if indeed
Caſſandra's happineſs be dear to thee;
Oh, do not drag me to that hateful land,

Where

Where every eye will look with ſcorn upon me.
The very pomp and ſplendor of Mycenæ
Will but upbraid me with my country's miſery.
Have pity on my mother's feeble age;
Have pity on the youth of poor Polyxena;
Have pity, oh have pity on Caſſandra!

AGAMEMNON.

Where tends thy frantic ſorrow? Well thou know'ſt
My fondeſt wiſh has been to ſee thee bleſt.

CASSANDRA.

Here, on this parent earth, where firſt the ſun
Beam'd on our infant years, where once, each morn,
Joyful we welcom'd his returning light
That wak'd us but to bliſs, till that ſad hour
When Helen's crimes doom'd us to deep deſtruction;
Here let us take our mournful way together:
So when the Fates ſuppreſs the breath of Hecuba,
Our pious hands may the laſt rites perform.
'Twas here great Priam fell, and noble Hector;
The wife may mix her aſhes with her huſband's,
The mother with her children; and when I,
With ſad Polyxena, worn out with grief,
Shall die, we too may ſleep with our forefathers.

AGAMEMNON.

Alas! Caſſandra, wilt thou never ceaſe
To urge a fruitleſs pray'r? Thou know'ſt that Greece
Has ſworn the utter ruin of thy country.

Here muſt eternal deſolation frown.
In vain ſhould I oppoſe the general voice.
Scarce could I reſcue from their jealous fury
The ſad remains of thy diſaſtrous houſe.
Ev'n thee their barbarous policy had doom'd,
Thee, a weak helpleſs woman, to deſtruction;
And canſt thou vainly hope the Greeks will ſuffer
The ſeed of Ilium's monarchs here to languiſh,
Gather the ſcatter'd ſons of periſh'd Troy,
And, brooding o'er your wrongs, cheriſh the ſeeds
Of future wars, and vengeance for the paſt?

CASSANDRA.

To this devoted ſhore my ſoul is fix'd.
On me, on me, let Greece exhauſt her rage;
Here will I periſh, I defy their malice,
For death is mercy to the greatly wretched.

AGAMEMNON.

Yet hear thy lover, and thy friend—

CASSANDRA.

Away!
You love me not.

AGAMEMNON.

Ungenerous, and unjuſt!

CASSANDRA.

Wound not my ear with thy ill-tim'd reproaches:
Thou art the author of the woes I ſuffer.
Thy love is hateful to me. Thoſe fell hands

Stain'd

Stain'd with my kindred's blood. Thy heart is pityleſs,
Unfit to rule; to the poor ſlaves that fear thee
Harſh and imperious——

AGAMEMNON.

Princeſs, to thy woes
Much may be pardon'd; yet beware, leſt, rous'd
At length by thy obdurate folly,
My anger ſhall conſign thee to deſtruction.
Awhile poſſeſs thy leiſure, and reflect
On what thou art, and what is Agamemnon.

SCENE V.

CASSANDRA, TROJAN CAPTIVES.

TROJAN CAPTIVE.

Alas! what haſt thou done? thou haſt incens'd
Him from whoſe pow'r alone we drew protection.
Ah! thou haſt pull'd on our devoted heads
Untimely ruin. Ere 'tis yet too late,
Fly, princeſs, fly, ſooth the offended monarch,
And deprecate his formidable wrath.

CASSANDRA.

My friends, ye ſad companions of my bondage,
Diſmiſs your fears; if Agamemnon frown,
He frowns on me alone. I have already
Drank deeply of the bitter cup of ſorrow;
Nor can inventive cruelty inflict
Beyond what I have ſuffer'd: I have therefore

Courted his wrath, and ſought for welcome death,
Alas! in vain. I muſt be wretched ſtill.

CAPTIVE.

Farewell then all our hopes. This deſperate frenzy
Will in one common fate involve us all.

CASSANDRA.

A moment yet, a moment's ſpace is given,
And you will wiſh that rapid diſſolution
Had ſwept you from the chearful light of heav'n,
Nor left partakers of the woes to come.
I ſee the gathering ſtorm. O houſe of Priam!
Oh daughters of fall'n Troy! it comes, it comes
Big with new ills, and urg'd along by fate.
Thrice happy whom the ſilent grave contains.
But we—What gloomy viſions round me riſe,
What horrors ſwarm!—we are not with the happy.

CAPTIVE.

Fear ſhoots through all my veins. Immortal Pow'rs!
To what are we reſerv'd?

CASSANDRA.

Enquire not, virgins,
Th' inexorable Gods will ſoon declare,
Too ſoon their dreadful purpoſe. Seek we now
That mournful manſion, vocal ſtill to ſtrains
Of grief, the ceaſeleſs moan of Hecuba:
Bow'd down with age, and doubly bow'd with miſery.
How ſhall her feeble frame ſupport the blow!

ACT

ACT II.

SCENE I.

HECUBA, CASSANDRA, CAPTIVES.

HECUBA.

SUPPORT me, oh my daughters! bear me forward,
That yet once more theſe aged eyes may reſt
Upon the poor remains of ruin'd Troy.
Oh plains, in vain belov'd! oh ſcenes of joys!
But joys that ſoon retiring left their place
To nameleſs woes, and horrors without end.
Where now the ſwelling grain, the cluſt'ring vines,
That once in full profuſion flouriſh'd round?
Where the gay ſplendor of your tow'ry cities,
Whoſe populous ſtreets were like the ſwarming hive?
Where are the ſacred temples of your Gods?
All loſt in one promiſcuous ruin: all
Ravag'd, deform'd, profan'd, and deſolate.
Thee too, my daughter—Oh my hapleſs children!
Not for myſelf I mourn; my few ſad days
Had ſoon been paſs'd away, and waſting miſery
Had wrought its own relief. But you—that thought

Indeed is full of anguiſh—When, alas,
Shall end your ſorrows, oh my hapleſs children!

CASSANDRA.

Oh author of my life, the only bleſſing,
The ſole ſupport and comfort we have left!
Weep not for us. Th' immortal Gods we worſhip
Will guard their fav'rite Innocence from wrong.
Short is the triumph of the proud and impious,
And from the feeble ken of mortal ſight,
Th' irrevocable laws of fate conceal'd.
To-morrow's ſun may ſhine on our deliverance.

HECUBA.

Oh daughter, what have we to do with hope?
The Gods have pour'd their curſes on our heads.
Alas, have we deſerv'd them? We have never
Deſpis'd their temples, and their righteous laws;
We have no hoſpitable rites profan'd,
No holy nuptial couch defil'd with guilt.
Let then the nations of the world behold us
Guiltleſs, yet groaning with unequall'd anguiſh,
While ſhameleſs Helen (can my patience bear it?)
Deform'd with crimes, tho' ſprung from race divine,
Shares ev'ry bliſs—then ſay, the Gods are juſt.

CASSANDRA.

Oh pardon, Madam, my preſumptuous tongue,
That dares reprove the parent I revere.
Shall we arraign the juſtice of the Gods,

And

And with licentious and reproachful ſpeech
Profane the awful majeſty of Heav'n?
Shall we, poor reptiles as we are, reſiſt
Omnipotence, and murmur at his will?
The Gods, with ſteady and impartial hand,
Diſtribute good and evil to mankind.
There was a time, when on thy favour'd head
They ſhower'd their choiceſt bleſſings. Oh my mother,
Be thankful for the paſt, and let thy patience
Diſarm the wrathful pow'rs that now purſue thee.

HECUBA.

There was a time, indeed, when Hecuba
Was number'd with the happy. Might thoſe hours
Return once more! Then peace and wealth were mine,
And the wide realm of Phrygia hail'd me queen.
Alas! what am I now? I then was mother
Of many children; many ſons I had,
Prudent in council, matchleſs in the field.
One only—oh the horrid ſcenes that crowd
Upon my memory!—
One only ſpurn'd th' inviolable laws
Of hoſpitable Jove. Curſt be the hour
When firſt my womb teem'd with th' abhorred fruit!
Oh doubly curſt the hour, when I deſpis'd
The warning of the Gods, and gave him life!
For this the vengeful Furies now purſue me;
For this my murder'd huſband haunts my ſlumbers;

My Hector too—Diſtraction!—Oh Caſſandra!
I laid your native Troy in aſhes; I
Let looſe the bloody dogs of war, to prey
Upon my ſlaughter'd children; gave you all
To ſorrow, death, diſhonour; Nemeſis,
Exhauſt your wrath on me!

CASSANDRA.

Aſſiſt her, Heaven!
What wildneſs in her looks! Her colour flies;
Her heaving breaſt beats quick. Not long can nature
Support ſuch ſtrong emotions; yet even now
My boding boſom throbs with ills to come,
And ſhapes of horror ſwim before my ſight.

CAPTIVE.

Lo! where with haggard eye, and trembling ſtep,
One of our captive brethren hither moves.

CASSANDRA.

Through the wide camp the ſound of tumult rings,
And clanging arms and threat'ning ſhouts ariſe.

SCENE II.

ENTER THE SECOND CAPTIVE.

What is thy meſſage? That 'tis full of terror
Too well thy looks declare.

SECOND

SECOND CAPTIVE.

Oh will the woes
Of our diſaſtrous country know no end?
When will remorſeleſs Juno ceaſe from vengeance?

HECUBA.

Say whither tend thy words? Greece has already
Robb'd us of all that mortals prize on earth,
All that could lighten life. Has then her council
Doom'd me to death? It is a welcome ſentence.

SECOND CAPTIVE.

Oh moſt unhappy mother!

HECUBA.

Ha, what ſay'ſt thou?
Are then my children threaten'd? ſpeak.

SECOND CAPTIVE.

I dare not.

HECUBA.

'Tis then too plain.

CASSANDRA.

Speak, I conjure thee, Trojan,
And free us from the anguiſh of ſuſpence.

SECOND CAPTIVE.

Know then the worſt. Th' aſſembly of the Greeks
Was met; the princes in due order plac'd;
When lo, with artful and inſidious ſpeech
Troy's bittereſt foe, the dark Ulyſſes, roſe,

And

And bad the ſeer for prophecy renown'd,
The reverend Calchas, ſpeak the hidden cauſe,
What God incens'd for ſacrifice withheld
So long to their deſiring ſight denies
The joyful proſpect of their native land.
He ſaid; and ſtrait, with well-diſſembled fear,
Uproſe the prieſt, and "Swear, ye chiefs," he cried,
"That whatſoe'er the oracles of Heaven
My tongue muſt now diſcloſe, I ſhall be ſafe
From violence." Th' aſſembled princes ſwore.
The prophet then, "The mighty ſon of Peleus
Demands his promis'd bride, the fair Polyxena.
Once your ingratitude you mourn'd in blood;
Tempt not the vengeance of the Gods again,
But deprecate the hero's angry ſhade."
Loud plaudits roſe around. Cold horror crept
Through all my veins. Trembling I left the place,
And haſted hither with the mournful tidings.

CASSANDRA.

She falls!—Support her, virgins—nature ſinks
Oppreſs'd beneath accumulated woe.
So—gently raiſe her. The freſh-breathing gale
May rouſe her torpid ſenſes. See, ſhe wakes;
Her languid eyes ſhe raiſes; but till night,
Eternal night ſhall cover their dim orbs,
Peace ſhall not ſooth her anguiſh.

HECUBA.

HECUBA.

Yet again
Do I behold thy light, oh chearful ſun?
Chearful to all but me. Oh ye juſt Gods,
Was this blow wanting?—Oh my child, my child!
Barbarians!—This, is this your boaſted mercy?
For this, when Troy ſunk in devouring flames,
Amid the carnage of that fatal night,
For this was I preſerv'd? Hell has no torments
To match what I endure. Ha! what are you?
My friends?—You weep—oh rather join to curſe me.
I am the fatal authoreſs of your ſufferings;
I bore the brand which has conſum'd us all!
The wrath of Heav'n purſues my ſteps; I am
The mother of that wretch, whoſe hot deſire
Nor plighted faith, nor hoſpitable rites
Reſtrain'd. I ſnatch'd thee, oh my ſon, from death,
Tho' warn'd by the dread voices of the Gods,
And now I juſtly ſuffer.

CASSANDRA.

Oh my mother,
Baniſh theſe black reflections, which but add
To griefs too fierce already. Thou art free
From guilt; and thoſe to whoſe proud crimes ſucceſs
Has lent a tranſient ſplendor that deceives
The dazzled multitude, can never know
So ſweet a thought, a tranſport ſo ſincere.

HECUBA.

HECUBA.

Would'ſt thou ſpeak comfort to me? Hence, I ſpurn it.
Can I taſte comfort who have done with hope?
The final doom is paſt. My child muſt die;
The poor defenceleſs innocent muſt die.
She has no friend to ſave her; no kind hand
Spreads a protecting ſhield 'twixt her and fate.

CASSANDRA.

Are there not Gods above us?

HECUBA.

Vain, vain hope.
We are abandon'd by the Gods, and Fate,
Whom even Gods obey, has ſeal'd our doom.
Come then, my daughters, lead me, lead me on,
That I may ſeek th' inexorable kings,
And, groveling in the duſt, implore their pity.
This one ſad boon, at leaſt, the Gods may grant;
This fatal mercy ev'n my foes beſtow;
That firſt theſe veins may bleed; that theſe old eyes
May ne'er behold the murther of my child.
Oh my Polyxena! my dear Polyxena!
How gladly ſhould I cloſe my eyes in death,
Might but my life ſuffice to glut their fury;
Might I but add one hour to thine, Polyxena!

SCENE III.

ENTER POLYXENA.

POLYXENA.

The voice of lamentation reach'd my ear;
And as I nearer drew, in mournful guiſe
My mother's fault'ring tongue pronounc'd Polyxena.
What new alarm?—My mother!—mute diſtreſs
O'erwhelms her. Speak, Caſſandra, I conjure thee,
What evils threat the fountain of my life.
Oh, free my ſoul from fear.

HECUBA, *(falls on her neck.)*

My child, my child!

CASSANDRA.

Oh my unhappy ſiſter!

POLYXENA.

With your tears
Alone you anſwer me. What ſhould this mean?
What is this dreadful ſentence which the tongue
Wants power to utter?

CASSANDRA.

Oh, Polyxena!
How ſhall my lips diſcloſe the tale of horror?
What crimes are thine, on thy devoted head
To draw ſo harſh a doom?

POLYXENA,

POLYXENA.

Your ſorrows then
Are ſhed for me? What have the Greeks again
Prepar'd accurſed rites, whence the juſt Gods,
Wrathful, avert their eyes; where Hymen frowns;
And doſt thou think ſo poorly of Polyxena,
That ſhe will ſtoop to own an Argive huſband,
His hands yet reeking with her kindred blood?
No, my Caſſandra, I have Hector's ſoul;
Diſhonour ne'er can reach me. Unappall'd
I can meet death. Peace dwells within the tomb.

HECUBA.

Alas, my daughter, thou wert all my comfort,
And this ſad hour muſt tear thee from my breaſt
Never to be reſtor'd!

CASSANDRA.

The ſon of Peleus,
Ev'n in the grave inſatiable of blood,
Demands, and Greece decrees, that thou ſhalt fall
A victim to his manes.

POLYXENA.

And is this
The dreadful doom? Witneſs, immortal Powers!
That fearleſs, unrepining, I approach
The altar; to the ſacrificer's knife
Fearleſs preſent my boſom. Yes, I go to viſit
My long-loſt friends; my father, brethren, all

The

The lov'd companions of my happier days.
Joyful I ſeek a refuge in the grave
From the rude mockery of inſulting foes,
From brutal force, and from the ſad reflection
Of what I once have been, and now I am.

HECUBA.

Oh agony!—my daughter!—Oh! I cannot,
I cannot bear this parting. Madneſs now
Were welcome to me. Heaven gave me ſenſe
Only to feel misfortune.

POLYXENA.

Theſe complaints,
This frantic ſorrow, tear my breaſt with pangs,
Which the pale king of terrors, though array'd
In tenfold horror, never could inflict.
Ceaſe to lament: we part to meet again.
Here we are but companions in affliction.
The hours are counted by misfortunes. Death,
Foe to the many, is a friend to us.
Death ſhall unite us in eternal peace.

HECUBA.

Alas! thus blooming in the ſpring of life,
Is death for thee? When age—Ah me! thoſe ſhouts—

CASSANDRA.

The ſwarming camp reſounds with tumult. Hence,
And learn the cauſe. The tread of thronging feet
I hear. Confuſion reigns around.

HECUBA.

HECUBA.

They come,
They come to tear her from me. Off, barbarians!
Have you no mercy? Whither shall we fly—
Are there no Gods to hear?

CASSANDRA.

Be patient, Madam,
The Gods will hear, and my prophetic soul
Ev'n now forebodes the joyful dawn of hope.
In vain our mortal and imperfect sight
Would pierce the gloom of dark futurity.
The past presents a chequer'd scene, of good
And ill, alternate; and the present moment
Limits our scanty knowledge. With the next,
Though now the tempest rage, and loud destruction,
The sun may dart his radiance through the clouds,
And universal nature smile again.

FIRST CAPTIVE.

Princess, thy words are wise; and even now,
Behold Lycaon hither bends his way;
Impatience in his gait, and in his eye
Joy smiling sits. We have not hop'd in vain.

SCENE

SCENE IV.

LYCAON ENTERS.

LYCAON.

Bleſt be the guardian Pow'rs that yet protect
The poor remains of Troy!

HECUBA.

And is there hope?
Shall my child live?

LYCAON.

That child, my honour'd miſtreſs,
Is lov'd of Heav'n. Know then, that fierce contention
Divides the Argive chiefs. Scarce had the doom,
The dreadful doom, paſs'd the fell lips of Calchas,
When, fir'd with juſt diſdain, the king of men
Uproſe, and, hurling on the ground his ſceptre,
Swore to protect your daughter, by the Gods
Whoſe attribute is juſtice.

HECUBA.

Have the wretched
Then found at length a friend?

LYCAON.

Hence fierce debate,
Rage in each heart, and fury in each eye,
The louring princes part.

POLYXENA.

Ye Pow'rs ſupreme,
Whoſe mercy from a parent's eye has wip'd
The ſtreaming tear, accept the daughter's praiſe!

CASSANDRA.

Ye children of affliction, hear my words:
Heaven may protect, where the frail ſtrength of man,
And human wiſdom fail.
Approach we then, with meek and reverent awe,
Th' eternal thrones; and firſt, thou holy Power,
High-rais'd above all Gods, who cloath'd in light
Sitt'ſt ere the birth of time; Greateſt and Beſt!
Whom, on the top of many-fountain'd Ide,
Oft have we prais'd with grateful ſacrifice;
Oh hear us now!

POLYXENA.

Hear too, thou Delian Queen,
Diana graceful with thy ſilver bow!
Whom chaſte and ſpotleſs purity of mind
Delights; if ever I have ſought thy ſhrine,
If I have join'd thy white and virgin train,
Hear, Goddeſs, hear!

HECUBA.

God of the fatal ſhafts,
Apollo, who in wrath from heaven deſcendeſt,
Dreadful as night, and through the tribes of men
Spread'ſt peſtilence and death——

CASSANDRA.

CASSANDRA.

Or more benign,
Father of Light, chear'd by whoſe golden beams
All nature teems prolific; and o'er earth
The circling ſeaſons pour their copious ſtore;
Thou, once the guardian of ill-fated Troy,
Who nine long years ſuſtain'd her falling wall,
Hear us, and ſave!

CAPTIVES.

Troy's great Protector, hear!

CASSANDRA.

Jove, Dian, Phœbus!

ALL.

Hear!

CASSANDRA.

For ye have power
To break the ſceptre of the proud; to hurl
Th' exulting victor vanquiſh'd to the ground;
To raiſe the fall'n, and lay the mighty low.

POLYXENA.

We aſk not empire, nor, what moſt allures
The wiſh of mortal man, deluſive wealth;
We aſk not for the vengeance of our wrongs.

HECUBA.

We only aſk for peace: that undiſturb'd
By new misfortunes, in the ſad remembrance

Of all that once was dear, now loſt for ever,
We may weep out the remnant of our lives.

CASSANDRA.

Enough: and if th' irrevocable doom
Be paſt; if miſery be our portion here;
Be this our comfort:—There muſt be, beyond
The narrow confines of this reſtleſs world,
Some place for ſuffering virtue; ſome bleſt ſoil,
Where the vext ſoul at length ſhall be at peace.
"The Fates for us prepare Elyſian plains,
Where ſoft Eteſian gales for ever blow,
And tranquil joys in long ſucceſſion flow.
Thoſe happy climes each ruder paſſion flies;
Nor Envy rankles there, nor jars ariſe;
No Tyrant's unrelenting frown is ſeen,
Nor ſad Captivity's dejected mien;
Ambition, Avarice, Luſt, Revenge, Deſpair,
Ne'er rouſe the bleſt inhabitants to war:
But heav'nly Love, with ſofteſt influence, binds,
In flow'ry fetters, their congenial minds;
Entranc'd they hear, beneath the peaceful ſhades,
Th' alternate voices of th' Aonian maids,
While Contemplation bids their fancy ſoar
Sublimer heighths, to joys unknown before."

ACT III.

SCENE I.

AGAMEMNON ATTENDED, MENELAUS.

AGAMEMNON.

OH Greatneſs, to what riſks art thou expos'd!
How many cares and ſorrows form thy train!
How ſhall I act? What if I yield the victim?
Love, Pity, Juſtice, Honour, all forbid it.
Shall I protect her? If I do, Rebellion
With daring hand ſtrikes at my crown and life.
This was the deep contrivance of Ulyſſes,
That ſpecious traitor, who, by fair pretence
Of zeal for Greece, and ſimulated virtue,
Cheats the deluded multitude, and leads them
To aid his factious purpoſe.

MENELAUS.

Yet this traitor
Has ventur'd bravely for us; hath forſaken
His native kingdom, his domeſtic joys,
His blooming offspring, and his tender wife,
To fight our battles, and revenge our wrongs.

AGAMEMNON.

Oh that the barren rocks of Ithaca,
His native kingdom, had contain'd him ſtill!
Thoſe barren rocks, that tempeſt-beaten ſhore,
This generous chief forſook, to ſhare the ſpoils
Of wealthy Troy, won by the hardy deeds,
The toil, the wounds of others.

MENELAUS.

I have often
Prov'd his unſhaken faith, his conſtant friendſhip;
And much it moves my wonder, that diſtruſt
Should now attaint his honour. On what ground
Stands thy ſuſpicion?

AGAMEMNON.

Worthy Menelaus,
Thy generous temper, and miſtaken gratitude,
Regard Ulyſſes with a partial eye.
But time will ſoon reveal this ſmooth diſſembler
In native colours. My exalted ſtation
He views with envy, and his dark deſigns
To its foundation ſhake thy brother's throne.
Ev'n now, by his pernicious artifice,
Rous'd into fury, thro' th' extended camp,
With foul reproach, and mutinous complaint,
The ſoldiers wound our ear. Th' impetuous Pyrrhus
Collects his bold Theſſalians, vainly deeming

To wreſt the ſceptre from our ſtronger graſp.
We yet their hopes ſhall fruſtrate.

MENELAUS.

Raſh, and headſtrong,
Pyrrhus may court deſtruction; but Ulyſſes,
I pledge my life, is faithful.

AGAMEMNON.

Lo where comes
Achilles' furious ſon. Upon his brow
Sits ſtern defiance. Inſolent rebellion
Flames in his eye.

SCENE II.

PYRRHUS ENTERS.

AGAMEMNON.

When laſt we parted, Pyrrhus,
Preſumptuous thou didſt brave our anger. Say,
What is thy purpoſe now?

PYRRHUS.

And needs there words
To ſpeak my purpoſe? Does no inward monitor
Inform thee, wherefore comes Achilles' ſon?
Achilles, whom in life thou moſt didſt injure,
And now thy envy in the grave purſues.

AGAMEMNON.

Young man, I reverenc'd thy godlike ſire;
And would to Heav'n inexorable Fate
Had ſpar'd the bulwark and the pride of Greece!
For though his fiery temper oft betray'd
His youth to error, yet returning reaſon
Would ſoon atone th' involuntary fault:
And he was bleſt with every manly virtue,
Brave, open, generous, friendly, and ſincere.

PYRRHUS.

And what avail'd him all theſe boaſted virtues,
His generous, open, unſuſpicious temper?
To truſt the gratitude of Agamemnon;
That gratitude, which, when his ſword had foil'd
The foes you fear'd, and conquer'd realms for you,
Diſgrac'd your benefactor, baſely robb'd him,
And foul reproach, and contumelious uſage
Heap'd on the man, whoſe proweſs made you great.

AGAMEMNON.

Prince, this opprobrious language ill beſeems
A ſubject's mouth, or fits a king to hear.

PYRRHUS.

A ſubject's mouth!——

AGAMEMNON.

Yes, haughty boy, a ſubject's.
I am thy ſovereign here. The common choice
On me conferr'd ſupreme command; and thou,

Preſumptuous

Preſumptuous as thou art, ſhalt learn obedience,
Or puniſhment o'ertake thee.

PYRRHUS.

Inſolence!
Puniſhment!—But this arm——

AGAMEMNON.

Vain boaſter, know
I ſcorn thy feeble menace. To thy tent,
And rate the ſlaves whoſe baſeneſs feeds thy pride;
Nor till thy headſtrong paſſion learn reſtraint
Intrude again into thy General's preſence.

PYRRHUS.

Ha! doſt thou brave me? Know then, Agamemnon,
I came not hither, or to dread thy wrath,
Or beg a paltry boon. I came to vindicate
My right, the right of my departed ſire;
To claim Polyxena, and tell thee, king,
This arm ſhall force her from thee.

AGAMEMNON.

No, prince, I will not ſtain my hard-earn'd laurels
By ſuch a deed as this; I will not ſhed,
In wantonneſs of cruelty, the blood
Of helpleſs innocence, and whom the ſword
In war's promiſcuous carnage ſpar'd, reſign
To the blind rage of ruthleſs ſuperſtition.

PYRRHUS.

PYRRHUS.

Fine ſpecious talker! In what flattering colours
Haſt thou dreſt up ingratitude and falſehood!
My ſoul deteſts him as the gates of hell,
Whoſe words belye the feelings of his heart.
'Tis then the voice of ſoft humanity,
'Tis juſtice, mercy, Heav'n's beſt attribute,
That pleads ſo ſtrongly for Polyxena!
Now, by the ſpirit of my ſire, I bluſh,
Ev'n for my foe, for thee. 'Twere nobler far
With ſteady front t' avow thy real motive,
Thy paſſion for Caſſandra, than to add
To guilt that vice of cowards, vile hypocriſy.

AGAMEMNON.

Let cowards wage a noiſy war with words;
But Agamemnon on his ſword relies,
And the firm juſtice of th' immortal Gods.

PYRRHUS.

Juſtly doſt thou reprove me ling'ring here.
I go, proud man, ſoon to return more dreadful.
Then ſhalt thou tremble, when my lifted arm
Shall hurl inevitable vengeance on thee;
Then ſhalt thou fear, and ſue too late for mercy.

* Ἐχθρὸς γὰρ μοι κεῖνος, ὁμῶς Ἀΐδαο πύλῃσιν
Ὅς κεν ὁ μὲν κεύθῃ ἑνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ βάζῃ.

SCENE

SCENE III.

AGAMEMNON, MENELAUS, ATTENDANTS.

AGAMEMNON.

Hence, Menelaus, arm our numerous friends;
Summon each chief that yet obeys our orders.
We muſt repreſs the inſolence of Pyrrhus,
Or tamely yield our high authority.

MENELAUS.

The warlike bands from Argos and Mycenæ,
And thoſe who, from Eurotas' banks, beneath
My banner ſought the war, are brave and faithful.

AGAMEMNON.

Thoſe too of Salamis, whom Teucer leads;
They have not yet forgot the godlike Ajax,
Nor by what arts Ulyſſes overcame.
Ætolian Diomede; he, though the friend
Of that deteſted traitor, ſtill obeys
His General's voice: Idomeneus, and Merion,
Meneſtheus, and the ſpeed of Locrian Ajax;
And Philoctetes too; he yet remembers
Who left him helpleſs on the deſert ſhore.
Theſe on the plain before the royal tent

Aſſemble.

Aſſemble. Let thy care, meanwhile, Talthybius,
Array our valiant Argives: let Adraſtus
Collect Mycenæ's warriors: Arcas, thou
Shalt with a choſen band attend our perſon.
Each to his charge: be bold, and vigilant.

SCENE IV.

ULYSSES, CALCHAS.

CALCHAS.

Ulyſſes, we have urg'd this point too far.
The king is fix'd, immoveable as fate;
His pow'r too deeply rooted: in his ſtrength
Secure, he mocks the fury of the ſtorm.

ULYSSES.

No, Calchas, pow'rful as he is, the ſtorm
Will ſhake, and, if it cannot bend, deſtroy.
The prince who rules over divided ſubjects,
Though wiſdom guide his counſels, and his hand
Undaunted courage, totters in his throne.

CALCHAS.

Thus hope, with flattering dreams of fair ſucceſs,
Deludes the wiſeſt. No, the Greeks will never
Throw off their vow'd obedience to the king.
Didſt thou not mark how the baſe coward rabble
Stood at his frown abaſh'd, and ſhook with fear.

ULYSSES.

ULYSSES.

I mark'd them well. I ſaw the general plaudit,
That ſeal'd the ſentence of Polyxena,
At once ſuppreſs'd; but no unmanly fear
Deform a Grecian face; in every eye
Lighten'd the fire of generous indignation,
And every heaving boſom ſwell'd with rage.
The moſt in ſecret murmur'd, yet there were
Who loudly ſpoke diſpleaſure: chiefly Pyrrhus,
Who, with his father's crown, inherits all
His courage and his fierceneſs; like Achilles,
Impatient of controul, impetuous, haughty,
Full of reſentment, jealous of his honour.

CALCHAS.

I know him well; and hatred of the king,
Whom he conſiders as the foe profeſt
Of his dead father, rankles in his boſom.

ULYSSES.

His temper ſoon will kindle into flame.
The ſoldiers too, who have ſo oft beheld him
Sweep like a whirlwind o'er th' embattled plain,
Equall'd by none but by his godlike ſire,
Almoſt adore their hero. He will ſhake
The camp with tumult; while thy holy tongue
Shall thunder execrations upon him,
Who of due honours dares defraud the dead.
Oh Calchas, call that fatal day to mind,

When

When bridal garlands deck'd the ſacred fane,
And faithleſs Troy receiv'd the pride of Greece
With deadly blandiſhment.

CALCHAS.

The ſad remembrance
Brings tears into my eyes.

ULYSSES.

Unarm'd he went,
Fearleſs, and unſuſpicious. Serpent-like
Th' aſſaſſin Paris lurk'd among the crowd——

CALCHAS.

Oh, wretch accurſt!

ULYSSES.

And while the hero gaz'd
In ſilent tranſport on his beauteous bride,
And not a thought of war, or deeds of death,
Broke on his peaceful boſom, drew the bow,
And ſtain'd the altars of the Gods with blood.

CALCHAS.

The deed of horror the juſt Pow'rs beheld
Offended, and to ſwift deſtruction doom'd
Perfidious Troy.

ULYSSES.

Then bending o'er the corſe,
Aſſembled Greece bedew'd their arms with tears,
And with deep imprecations ſwore revenge;
Swore, that in dread atonement, hecatombs

Of

Of Trojan ſlain ſhould fall; Priam, and all
His faithleſs ſons, and Troy their funeral pile.
Swore too, that whom he lov'd, the fair Polyxena,
Should be his lot alone.

CALCHAS.

It is moſt true.

ULYSSES.

Yet now, regardleſs of that holy tie,
Regardleſs of our honour, int'reſt, gratitude,
Compaſſion, or ſome motive better gueſs'd
Than nam'd, leads Agamemnon to retain
His captive. But ſhall we become the ſport
Of each unruly paſſion that invades
His breaſt? Shall we, becauſe we lov'd his virtues,
Be pandars to his vices? Forbid it, Pallas,
Forbid it all the guardian Pow'rs of Greece.

CALCHAS.

Not with leſs fervent zeal than thine, Ulyſſes,
My heart is fir'd, to ſeek my country's welfare.
But all my hopes are blaſted. Great Achilles
Is now an empty name. Their ancient quarrel,
Source of ſo many ills to Greece, ſtill lives
In Agamemnon's memory——

ULYSSES.

Think'ſt thou, Calchas,
The tale, which even now could heave thy breaſt
With

With mighty paſſion, has been heard unmov'd
By the quick ſpirit of the fiery Pyrrhus?
Think'ſt thou the brave companions of Achilles,
Who ſhar'd his triumphs, and who lov'd his perſon,
Will aid the baſe reſentment of the king?
Poorly defraud the manes of their hero,
That hero, ſecond only to the Gods,
To gratify the humour of a tyrant?
Know then, the gathering clouds announce the tempeſt;
Ev'n now the throne of Agamemnon ſhakes,
Ev'n now the warlike Myrmidons are arming;
Ev'n now young Pyrrhus marſhals them for fight.

CALCHAS.

But ſhould the king prevail——

ULYSSES.

I grant he may;
With practis'd ſkill he leads his troops to battle;
Not ſo the chief oppos'd: but patient Wiſdom
Turns to her own advantage each event,
And, with firm ſtep her deſtin'd end purſuing,
Compels reluctant Fortune to befriend her.
Truſt then to me. Our country's guardian Goddeſs,
Pallas, will bleſs the counſels ſhe inſpires.
But lo! the king approaches. Wrapt in thought
He ſeems, and frowns contract his angry brow.

Let

Let us retire. Perſuaſion would in vain
Exert her voice. Reſentment and ſuſpicion
Poſſeſs his ſoul, and point his rage at us.

SCENE V.

AGAMEMNON, AN OFFICER.

AGAMEMNON.

Th' impetuous Pyrrhus ruſhes on deſtruction,
His troops are weak in number, and his raſhneſs
Unequal to command.
Go, Medon, to my brother; bid him haſten
Th' auxiliar bands, and with a wary eye
Obſerve Ulyſſes, yet with utmoſt caution,
Leſt our ſuſpicion to his piercing eye
May be too manifeſt, and, gath'ring thence
Alarm, he join the foe.—Oh mighty Jove,
By whom the ſcepter'd lords of human race
Have pow'r, propitious thunder on my ſide!
This vain attempt repell'd, at length Ulyſſes,
By whoſe ſeditious breath the flame is kindled,
Traitor alike to Pyrrhus and to me,
In his own artifice involv'd, may periſh.

SCENE VI.

AGAMEMNON, CASSANDRA.

AGAMEMNON.

Caſſandra! bath'd in tears! How doubly fair,
With what reſiſtleſs beauty ſhe appears!
There is a charm in ſuff'ring innocence,
To make the coldeſt boſom glow with pity.
Oh lovely Mourner, lovelier in thy tears,
If for Polyxena thoſe ſtreams are ſhed,
Diſpel thy fears, and let thoſe radiant eyes
Aſſume new luſtre from fair hope and joy.

CASSANDRA.

Oh Prince, while proſtrate at thy feet I fall,
And groveling in the duſt implore thy pity,
Think, whom thou ſee'ſt thus low, thus poor, thus friendleſs,
Was once the daughter of a king like thee.
As many cities own'd my father's ſway,
As many brave allies his ſtandard join'd.

AGAMEMNON.

I ſhare in all thy griefs. Oh riſe, fair Princeſs.

CASSANDRA.

Ah no; this abject poſture beſt becomes
So loſt a wretch as I am. Yet reflect

Upon the ſtrange viciſſitude of things;
How giddy Fortune, in her airy round,
Sports with the fates of empires and of kings:
Think on the many bleſſings which attend
Thy proſp'rous days, and pity thoſe who have,
Alas! for ever loſt them.

AGAMEMNON.

Heav'n be witneſs,
I pity thee, ev'n from my inmoſt ſoul.

CASSANDRA.

Think on the anguiſh which a parent ſuffers;
The pangs which tore thy boſom, when at Aulis—

AGAMEMNON,

Oh agony!

CASSANDRA.

Thy darling, Iphigenia,
The tender, blooming, guiltleſs Iphigenia,
Ev'n in thy ſight, from a fond mother's arms
Seduc'd by the baſe arts of curſt Ulyſſes,
Was dragg'd a trembling victim to the altar;
Ev'n in thy ſight receiv'd in her fair boſom
The murd'rous knife; ev'n in thy ſight expir'd.

AGAMEMNON.

Oh, thou haſt plung'd a thouſand daggers here;
Haſt rous'd a thouſand furies in my breaſt,
To drive all joy and peace from thence for ever.

But be appeas'd. I will protect Polyxena,
Though at the hazard of my crown and life.

CASSANDRA.

Oh, generous Agamemnon! my full heart
Fain would pour out its flood of thanks before thee;
But, oh, what words can ſpeak my gratitude?
Oh, 'tis a godlike taſk to ſooth affliction,
To raiſe th' oppreſs'd, and heal the wounded mind.
On deeds like this the righteous Gods look down
Well-pleas'd; and, when th' uplifted thunderbolt,
Provok'd by rapine, cruelty, and all
The various crimes which ſtain man's guilty race,
Hangs menacing deſtruction, deeds like this
Arreſt the arm of vengeance.

AGAMEMNON.

Oh, Caſſandra,
Where is the flinty heart, which woes like thine
Would not ſubdue to pity? With the mourners
I ſhare their grief; for I have known affliction.
But ſofter intereſts bend my ſoul to thee;
I doat on thee to madneſs.—Nay, Caſſandra,
Why that dejected air? Why are thoſe eyes
Averted, and bedew'd with riſing tears?
Am I a tyrant, whoſe remorſeleſs temper
Has added horrors to captivity?

Or

Or have I been thy friend, whoſe care has toil'd
To ſooth thy woes, and make thy bondage light?

CASSANDRA.

Oh, Sir, is this a time to talk of love,
When lamentation through our tents reſounds,
And danger, ruin, death, are ruſhing on us?

AGAMEMNON.

Ungrateful maid! And doſt thou think it nothing,
That I have drawn my ſword in thy defence?
'Tis thou haſt arm'd Achilles' ſon againſt me:
For thee my life, my crown, my fame, I hazard,
And when my patient love aſpires to hope,
Ev'n that poor boon thy cruelty denies me.

SCENE VII.

ENTER MENELAUS.

MENELAUS.

Thy orders are obey'd; the troops await thee.
Th' impetuous Pyrrhus gathers all his bands,
Arrays them for the fight, and ruſhes on.
Scarce thrice the ſpace thro' which a jav'lin flies,
Lanch'd from a vigorous arm, divides our hoſts.

AGAMEMNON.

Too long we linger; let us fly to battle,
And Jove and Pallas thunder on our ſide!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VIII.

CASSANDRA, CAPTIVES.

FIRST CAPTIVE.

Wherefore, Caſſandra, on thy bended brow
Does gloomy melancholy ſtill reſide,
When Fortune ſmiles at length, and the kind Gods
Have rais'd a ſtrong protector for Polyxena,
And ſav'd her from impending fate?

CASSANDRA.

Alas!
My lov'd companions, your ſhort gleam of joy
Fain would I not diſturb with dire forebodings.
Black thoughts invade my fancy, and I dread
I know not what. Peace muſt be ſtill a ſtranger
To my diſtracted breaſt.

FIRST CAPTIVE.

The wiſe enjoy
The preſent bleſſing, nor anticipate
Misfortunes, diſtant far.

CASSANDRA.

CASSANDRA.

My fears, perhaps,
Are groundleſs; but the mind familiar long
With ſorrow, draws, from every trivial thing,
Suſpicion and alarm.

CAPTIVE.

What ſhould we fear?
The hot-brain'd Pyrrhus never can prevail
Againſt the pow'r and prudence of the king.
And does not Agamemnon's ſolemn promiſe
Engage him to protect thy ſiſter's life?
Is not his generous temper prone to mercy,
Benevolent, and juſt?

CASSANDRA.

That he has virtues,
We, whom thoſe virtues ſav'd, perforce muſt own:
But, ah! how unavailing oft is virtue
To curb th' impetuous fury of our paſſions!
The paſſions too of princes, long diſus'd
To ſalutary rigour of reſtraint,
Break forth with double rage. Hence ſpring my fears:
He loves me; and who knows what dire reſolves
His ſuit rejected may at length inſpire?

CAPTIVE.

Oh Princeſs, might at length thy ſtubborn heart

Bend to his prayer; or, if thy fixt reſolve
Diſdains the rites of Hymen, ſmooth behaviour,
A ſmile, a courteous word, might feed his hope,
(A lover's faith is eaſily deceiv'd)
And lives, ſo dear to thee, ſecure from danger.

CASSANDRA.

Never. Caſſandra's ſoul abhors the thought.
Nor would the virtuous dignity of Hecuba
Receive a life bought by her child's diſhonour.

CAPTIVE.

Alas! while I lament the fatal prejudice,
That dooms us all to miſery, and to death,
I muſt perforce admire thee.

CASSANDRA.

'Tis not death,
Or torture, which is dreadful; 'tis ſuſpence.
The noble mind reſigns itſelf to fate,
And ſtands unſhaken in the tempeſt's rage.
But expectation of the coming ill
Is painful to the braveſt. In the hour
When ſtrong Neceſſity has ſeiz'd his prey,
The worſt is paſt already; we have felt
In thought the pangs, th' extreme of agony.
Oft in the lonely hours of contemplation,
My tortur'd fancy to my view preſents
My ſiſter bleeding at the altar's foot,

While

While Hecuba, diſhonour'd in the duſt,
Writhes with her pangs, and graſps my hand in death.
I live to envy their diſaſtrous fate;
And, praying, weeping, raving, I am dragg'd
To Agamemnon's bed, till, fated, he
Conſigns me o'er to ſome rude ruffian's luſt.
Madneſs is in the thought—Oh ſave me, ſave me,
If yet a God will hear the loſt Caſſandra!

[*Exeunt.*

ACT

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

HECUBA, POLYXENA, CAPTIVES.

HECUBA.

THANKS, gentle friends; alas! your tender care
I never can repay you. * Once I was
Your queen; I am your fellow-captive now.
My favour once had made you happy; now
I am an useless burthen, and but add
To your afflictions, too severe already.

FIRST CAPTIVE.

Oh my lov'd mistress, let not fruitless grief
O'ercast the dawn of hope that now salutes us.
The Gods have spread their shelt'ring arms before us;
The mighty Agamemnon fights your battles;
And should success upon his arms attend,
What have we not to hope? Yes, I will cherish
The rapt'rous thought; we may again revisit
The dwellings of our youth, our household Gods;
Ilium shall from her ashes spring, and Hecuba
Be once again a queen.

HECUBA.

* νυν εμοδ' ὁλον
Τρωαδες, ἰμιν, προσθεν δ' ὀνομαστην.
Euripides.

HECUBA.

Alas! my friends,
The pomp of empire has no charms for me.—
Oh Greatneſs! whom the croud at diſtance view,
And gaze, enamour'd, on ideal beauties,
While thoſe who graſp thee, find thee foul and loathſome;
Parent of ſorrow, cares, and diſappointment!—
No: Would the clemency of Agamemnon
Give ſome ſequeſter'd ſpot, ſome lone retreat,
Where I might paſs what yet remains of life;
Where, with my dying eyes, I might behold
My children ſafe in calm obſcurity,
Safe from the reſtleſs jealouſy of Greece!
'Tis all I aſk of Heav'n.

POLYXENA.

And we ſhall gain that calm retreat, my mother.
Wherefore ſhould they deny ſo poor a boon?
We have not wrong'd the Greeks, tho' they have brought
So many ills on us. They cannot fear us;
They cannot, great and powerful as they are,
Behold, with eyes of terror, poor, weak women,
Whoſe friends have periſh'd; who have none to help them.

HECUBA.

HECUBA.

Thy unexperienc'd youth, Polyxena,
Has yet to learn the ſavage ways of men.
By nature headſtrong, cruel, fierce, relentleſs,
They know not pity, and delight in blood:
Neceſſity firſt made them ſtoop to law,
And practiſe virtues which they cannot feel;
But when on Fortune's wings they riſe to pow'r,
Deſpotic, uncontroul'd, at once they burſt
The bonds which held them, and their ſtormy paſſions
~~Exert their utmoſt rage, now wanton grown~~ Now wanton grown by long reſtraint, exert
~~By long reſtraint,~~ Their utmoſt rage and ſcatter ruin round them.

POLYXENA.

Yet ſome are form'd of ſofter mould, and melt
At others' woe. Mov'd by Caſſandra's pray'rs,
Mov'd by the ſtory of a mother's anguiſh,
The king rejected the demands of Pyrrhus,
And with diſintereſted pity drew
His ſword, in the defence of friendleſs innocence.

HECUBA.

Diſintereſted pity!—no, my daughter,
Say rather pride, which ill could brook that ſubjects
Should ſcrutinize his actions, and preſume
To thwart his will. Ulyſſes' artifice
Rais'd up the phantom of the dead Achilles,

Enrag'd,

Enrag'd, that, lur'd by hope to win the love
Of my Caſſandra, whoſe firm ſoul is fix'd
Here to remain, the king ſo long delay'd
Their wiſh'd departure——

SCENE II.

ENTER A MESSENGER.

MESSENGER.

Conquering Agamemnon
Greets by my mouth the royal Hecuba.
Diſmiſs your fears; ſucceſs has crown'd his arms,
And haughty Pyrrhus mourns his glory fall'n.
Thy lov'd Polyxena is freed from danger,
And Greece no more diſputes her monarch's will.

HECUBA.

Thanks to the Gods! and, next to them, my thanks
Are due to Agamemnon. Tell the king
I have no words to ſpeak my gratitude;
Yet ſhall the orphan, ſav'd by him from death,
The widow, from whoſe eye his hand has wip'd
The tear, implore the bleſſing of the Gods
Upon his favour'd head.

SCENE III.

HECUBA, POLYXENA, CAPTIVES.

HECUBA.

Awhile we breathe.
Thou ſhalt not yet be torn from theſe old arms;
Still ſhall my fond, fond eyes behold my child.
Oh, might this bliſsful hour for ever laſt!
But darkneſs clouds the future.
My mind, accuſtom'd only to affliction,
Still will forebode I know not what of evil,
And fancy, kindling into madneſs, ſhapes
A thouſand forms of terror, and forbids
To taſte of happineſs; yet if the Gods
Delight in innocence, thy filial piety,
Thy truth, thy ſpotleſs purity of ſoul
Will move their pity.—Lo! with Menelaus
Ulyſſes moves this way, the foe profeſt
Of all our race; his ſight is painful to me.

POLYXENA.

Mark how intent their looks, their eager geſtures.
Their converſe, ſure, muſt be of high importance.

HECUBA.

Let us retire, my daughter. Even now,
Perhaps, yon wily traitor plots our ruin.

Oh

Oh fruſtrate all his ſchemes, all-gracious Heav'n!
Doom him to ſwift perdition! let him feel
But half the woes which he has caus'd to me!

SCENE IV.

MENELAUS, ULYSSES.

ULYSSES.

Now, by the Gods, the king has wrong'd me much.
Is this the fruit of all my ten years toil?
Thus are my faithful ſervices repaid?
Yet what have I not borne for Agamemnon?
But 'tis forgotten all: and thoſe whom gratitude
Should link with me in friendſhip's ſtricteſt bonds,
Are firſt to brand my fame with foul ſuſpicion.
Whom is it you ſuſpect? It is Ulyſſes;
He who has been moſt zealous in your cauſe.
Whoſe prudence drew Achilles to your aid?
Who ſlew the Thracian prince? Whoſe daring ſtep
Took through an hoſtile town his fearleſs way,
And from the citadel, where thouſands arm'd
Kept watch, by Diomede alone aſſiſted,
Bore off the tutelary Pow'r of Troy?

MENELAUS.

Oh friend, thy words are painful to my heart.
To own thy merit great, is only juſtice:

Greece

Greece with united voice aloud proclaims it,
And the wide world re-echoes with thy fame.
But I am bound to thee by every tie,
My friend, my benefactor. Thy ſincere
And noble nature never was ſuſpected
By Menelaus.

ULYSSES.

I believe it freely.
Thou art too good, too generous, and too juſt
To ſtoop to ſuch a meanneſs: but thy brother—
Oh Menelaus! his unkindneſs wounds me.

MENELAUS.

I mourn his fault; and in its very birth
Had check'd it; but his fiery temper, once
Alarm'd, ill brooks reſtraint. Time will reſtore
His better judgment, and your prudent conduct
In the late mutiny, will clear his doubts.

ULYSSES.

Raſh, inconſiderate man! whence ſprung thoſe doubts?
If from the purpos'd ſacrifice his wrath
Aroſe, did I propoſe it? No, 'twas Calchas:
And if the Gods demand the virgin's blood,
Am I to blame? Can I controul the Gods?
But ſay it was his purpoſe to detain
The fleet, and I oppos'd it. Is it therefore
That he complains? Ungenerous, and unjuſt!
Who firſt deceives his friends, and takes offence

That

That his diſſimulation has eſcap'd them.
Still in the public camp would he complain
Of angry Deities, whoſe portents dire
Bound us ſo long to this deteſted ſhore.
I thought he was ſincere, and ſo didſt thou,
So did united Greece. What wonder then
I acted as I did?

MENELAUS.

What ſhall I ſay?
Or how atone the fault of Agamemnon?

ULYSSES.

Ingratitude's the common lot of thoſe
Whoſe ſervices promote their prince's greatneſs.
Th' occaſion paſt, they're thrown neglected by.
But I was bound by no allegiance to him:
A monarch as himſelf. I was his friend;
I lov'd him; and have therefore toil'd to ſerve him.
'Tis hence more deeply his injuſtice wounds me.
A friend's diſtruſt pierces the feeling mind
With keeneſt anguiſh.

MENELAUS.

Believe me, my Ulyſſes,
You think on this too deeply. Agamemnon
Ere now repents of his ill-plac'd ſuſpicion.

ULYSSES.

I will rely upon thy friendſhip, Prince,
To clear my injur'd honour; and I ſwear,

Wrong'd as I am, my firmeſt wiſh is ſtill
Once more in mutual confidence and love
To join with Agamemnon. What is paſt
I blot for ever from my memory.

MENELAUS.

Soon at thy tent I'll meet thee, and report
Th' event of my endeavours. Fare thee well.

SCENE V.

MENELAUS.

And may the Gods ſtill favour and protect thee!
That thou art honeſt ſtill, thy ready aid
In the late conflict lent, forbids to doubt.
And much I fear thy only crime has been,
That thou haſt preſt too far our wiſh'd departure;
Yet if to languiſh for our native ſhore
Be criminal, what Greek is free from guilt?—
Oh Agamemnon, I forebode, the paſſion,
Which with ſuch fury now invades thy boſom,
Will tarniſh all thy glory, ſhake thy pow'r,
And, whom united Greece with pride obey'd,
Sink to contempt and infamy.

SCENE

SCENE VI.

MENELAUS, AGAMEMNON.

MENELAUS.

My brother!
Be this auſpicious day for ever bleſs'd,
Which fixes thy authority. Too late
The baffled Pyrrhus mourns his raſh attempt.

AGAMEMNON.

Such be the fate of all, whoſe envy ſtrikes
At my command, or pride diſputes my will!
But, Menelaus, I obſerved thee rapt
In thought, and on thy careful brow
A gloom, ill ſuited to a day like this.

MENELAUS.

Pardon a brothers' freedom, Agamemnon,
But thou haſt wrong'd Ulyſſes with ſuſpicion;
Some foe to both, ſome villain has traduc'd him;
Yet ſure his conduct——

AGAMEMNON.

Juſt is thy reproof.
I mark'd his prompt obedience to my orders;
He is no partner of the guilt of Pyrrhus.

MENELAUS.

Of all the chiefs who join'd their arms with ours
Him have I valued moſt. His prudence oft

Has turn'd the tide of fortune; has prevail'd
When valour ſtrove in vain.

AGAMEMNON.

It is moſt true:
Nor have I been forgetful of his ſervice.
Go then, my friend, and tell him; from my ſoul
I baniſh all ſuſpicion. 'Twas a guſt
Of ſudden paſſion, which obſcur'd my reaſon.
My mind, o'erburthen'd with the cares of empire,
Judg'd not aright: I ſee my error now,
And freely thus confeſs it.

MENELAUS.

This indeed
Is great, is noble, worthy Agamemnon.
Thus to acknowledge faults belongs alone
To thoſe, whom Heav'n above the race of mortals
Exalts, in every manly, generous virtue;
And amply for the injury compenſates.
Ulyſſes will be fix'd more firmly your's.

SCENE VII.

AGAMEMNON.

Once more Ulyſſes has eſcap'd my vengeance;
But ſhall not long. His policy and caution
Have left no proof of guilt. Artful, and popular,

To

To practiſe aught againſt him now were dangerous,
And might inflame ſedition. Yet I know
'Twas he that urg'd the furious Pyrrhus on.
But fraud I will oppoſe to fraud, and he
Shall ſhare the puniſhment, who ſhar'd the crime.
Profound diſſimulation ſhall conceal
My hatred, even from my brother's eye.
And, when to full ſecurity reſign'd
He deems no danger near, or art, or force
Releaſe me from my foe.

SCENE VIII.

AGAMEMNON, CASSANDRA.

AGAMEMNON.

Caſſandra here!
This meeting is moſt fortunate. My ſuit
May now be beſt enforc'd, while gratitude
Glows in her breaſt, and melts it to compliance.—
Hail, royal virgin! let me ſhare the joy
That fills thy boſom, for a ſiſter's ſafety.
And oh, forgive me, Madam, if I own
I fought, I conquer'd but for you alone.
And when I led my ſquadrons to the field,
This thought gave weight and vigour to my arm,

That ſhe, for whoſe dear ſake I courted danger,
Might ſmile at length upon my faithful love.

CASSANDRA.

Oh Agamemnon, if Caſſandra's gratitude
Could give thee happineſs, thou wert indeed
Beyond all utterance bleſt: but deeds like this
Are their own beſt reward. Succeeding times
Shall learn thy generous pity, and applaud.

AGAMEMNON.

And yet, Caſſandra, though renown be ſweet,
Purchas'd by fair and honourable deeds,
To me it is of little worth, compar'd
With the bright object of my vaſt ambition;
Oh, my Caſſandra, muſt I name thy love?
May I not plead a title to it now?
A ſiſter from impending ruin reſcu'd,
A mother from misfortune's worſt extreme:
Theſe are my merits, theſe to me thou ow'ſt;
Can theſe be dearly purchas'd by a ſmile?

CASSANDRA.

Oh, Sir, you wrong yourſelf, thus to impute
To an unworthy paſſion for your captive
Your generous ſuccour to the weak oppreſs'd.
No; Agamemnon acts from nobler motives;
Benevolence and pity warm his heart,
Which ſtoops not to the ſway of vulgar paſſions.

AGAMEMNON.

Is this Caſſandra's gratitude? This cold,
Inſulting mockery?

CASSANDRA.

Oh Agamemnon——

AGAMEMNON.

You trifle with my fondneſs. Had I us'd
The rights which conqueſt gave me o'er my ſlave,
Had I compell'd thee to accept my love,
Cuſtom had juſtify'd the deed. But I
Diſdain'd th' unmanly violence: I uſed thee
As thou hadſt been my queen, not as my captive:
Nor Clytemneſtra's ſelf is honour'd more.
You have abus'd my mercy. Shall my kindneſs
Be paid with ſcorn? No, my Caſſandra, no,
You muſt conſent to love me.

CASSANDRA.

Never.

AGAMEMNON.

Ha!

CASSANDRA.

I will not with falſe hopes delude thee, Prince;
I never will be thine.

AGAMEMNON.

Beware, raſh woman!
Tempt not too far my anger.

CASSANDRA.

I am fix'd
As fate; nor pray'rs, nor threats have pow'r to move me.

AGAMEMNON.

'Tis well. But hope not I will tamely bear
Thy ſcorn. Proud woman! thou ſhalt feel me.
Hence from my breaſt for ever let me baniſh
The fooliſh paſſion that ſo late diſgrac'd it.
Hate, keeneſt hate ſucceeds. I will prepare
New torments for thee. I will rack thy ſoul
With ſharpeſt anguiſh! Thou ſhalt mourn in blood
Thy black ingratitude. I'll caſt thee forth
To the loath'd arms of ev'ry brutal ſoldier,
The refuſe of the camp.

CASSANDRA.

Death, the beſt friend
The wretched find, is ſtill within my pow'r.—
My preſence, Sir, but moves your ſoul to fury;
Permit me to retire.

AGAMEMNON.

Begone: and know,
Ere night deſcends, Polyxena muſt die.

CASSANDRA, *(kneeling.)*

What have I heard? Oh, Sir, recall thoſe words!
On me, on me alone exhauſt your vengeance:
I only

I only have offended. Let me ſuffer!
What ſhall I ſay? Oh do not turn away.
I only aſk for death; but ſpare Polyxena!
Have you no mercy? O reſpect your honour,
Which cruelty like this will ſtain for ever!
I have deſerv'd to die; but poor Polyxena—
Oh ſpare, ſpare her! ſpare the wretched Hecuba,
Already ſinking under years and ſorrow!
Rob her not of the only comfort left her——

AGAMEMNON.

Thou know'ſt the terms of pardon. Thy compliance
Enſures their ſafety, and thy happineſs.
'Tis thy obdurate folly which condemns them,
And if they periſh, 'tis by thee they periſh.

CASSANDRA, *(riſing.)*

Thou haſt recall'd my ſenſes. Have I ſtoop'd
To ſue for mercy, groveling in the duſt?
Mercy from whom? My country's mortal foe.
Who mov'd me to diſhonour. I diſclaim
Th' ungraceful weakneſs. It is paſt, and now
I am myſelf again. To that abode
Of lamentation, where diſaſtrous Hecuba
Broods o'er the memory of her wrongs, I go
To bear thy ſentence. We will meet our fate
As ſuits the wife and daughters of a king.

SCENE

SCENE IX.

AGAMEMNON, ULYSSES AT A DISTANCE.

AGAMEMNON, *(not ſeeing* ULYSSES.)

Preſumptuous and obdurate as thou art,
Hence; but ere long my vengeance ſhall o'ertake thee.—
Curſe on the meanneſs of my coward ſoul,
That truckled to my ſlave! But ſhe has rous'd me;
Oh, fool! to riſk my throne, my fame, and life,
For this ungrateful woman. How I bluſh
At memory of my weakneſs!

ULYSSES.

You are ruffled.
What, has ſome new ſedition ſhook your peace?

AGAMEMNON.

Ulyſſes, fly this inſtant; bid the prieſts
Prepare for ſacrifice. I will no longer
Defraud the mighty dead of their due honour.
Unmoor the fleet, and to the fav'ring gale
Spread every canvas. Through the camp proclaim
Inſtant we ſteer for Greece. I grieve I check'd
Your juſt deſires. I am determin'd now.
Polyxena ſhall die.

ULYSSES.

ULYSSES.

This ſudden change——

AGAMEMNON.

Aſk not the cauſe. Polyxena ſhall die.
Pelides' injur'd ghoſt demands her. Greece
Requires her blood, and Greece ſhall be obey'd.

ULYSSES.

Oh, Sir, conſider well what 'tis you do.
Should you deſert Polyxena's defence,
Caſſandra's love——

AGAMEMNON.

Caſſandra! Furies ſeize her.
Name her no more; I ſicken at the ſound.
Alas! Ulyſſes, 'twas my love for her,
That poiſon to my fame, that held me here
In ignominious bondage: love of her
Firſt led me to withhold the victim deſtin'd,
By Greece united, to Achilles' tomb.

ULYSSES.

I muſt obey your will, yet Heav'n is witneſs
With what extreme reluctance——

AGAMEMNON.

If thou lov'ſt me
Thou wilt no longer tarry. Hence, I charge thee,
See that my will's perform'd: ev'n in the ſight
Of curſt Caſſandra, let her ſiſter die.

[*Exit* ULYSSES.

Hence,

Hence, I for ever baniſh from my breaſt
That bane of all our peace, and virtue, Love.
And in his ſtead, from the dark realms of Night,
Thoſe realms of lamentation and affright,
In all the horrors of your ſnaky hair,
Ye Furies, riſe! Grief, Terror, Rage, Deſpair!
The pow'rs of Hell in my aſſiſtance join,
And all the tranſports of revenge be mine!

ACT

ACT V.

SCENE I.

TROJAN CAPTIVES.

FIRST CAPTIVE.

THIS way the pomp muſt paſs. Here let us ſtand
To take our laſt farewell; to gaze once more
Upon that dying ſweetneſs.

SECOND CAPTIVE.

To behold
That lovely flower, which our foſt'ring care
With ſuch attention rear'd, untimely blaſted.

FIRST CAPTIVE.

Ah, fruitleſs care! ah, unavailing beauty!
Thoſe eyes that beam with ev'ry gentle virtue,
The iron hand of death muſt cloſe for ever.

THIRD CAPTIVE.

Th' unſullied whiteneſs of her poliſh'd neck,
Where with the Loves the ſiſter Graces play'd,
Soon ſhall the murd'rous knife deform with gore.

SECOND CAPTIVE.

A livid paleneſs ſhall uſurp the place
Of health's new-budded roſes in her cheek.
Thoſe lips, from which ſo muſically-ſoft
The graceful accents fell, no more ſhall open,
To ſhed their fragrance round.

THIRD CAPTIVE.

Oh, beſt-lov'd maid!
Thou dear companion of my youthful hours,
And art thou loſt for ever? Then, for ever
Will I lament thee. To my mournful heart
No comfort e'er ſhall come.

FIRST CAPTIVE.

Our lot is hopeleſs.
Oh, could our tears recall the fatal ſentence!
But what are tears, or pray'rs, or ſpotleſs virtue?
They cannot bend Ulyſſes to compaſſion;
They cannot ſave whom wrathful Heaven forſakes.—
Say, friend, where didſt thou leave the wretched Hecuba?
How did ſhe bear this laſt, worſt ſtroke of fate?

SECOND CAPTIVE.

Roll'd in the duſt, with frantic grief, ſhe tore
Her hoary hairs, ſhe ſmote her aged breaſt,
And heap'd the glowing embers on her head;
And oft with accent wild, and earneſt geſture,

Seem'd

Seem'd to hold converſe with her abſent child.
Then tax'd the juſtice of the Gods, and curs'd
The hour which gave her birth. At length exhauſted,
Within in ſpeechleſs agony ſhe lies.

FIRST CAPTIVE.

Where does the ſun, in his diurnal courſe,
Survey ſuch miſery? Unhappy woman!
Doom'd to drag on a wretched load of life
In worſe than mortal agony. In death
We touch the goal, the period of our woes;
But to thy view each ſlow-ſucceeding hour
Brings but a ſad variety of woe.—
Lo! where Caſſandra comes. Her lofty ſoul
Diſdains to bend beneath the weight of grief,
And with a manly fortitude ſurveys
The evils which ſurround her.

SCENE II.

CASSANDRA, CAPTIVES.

CASSANDRA.

We are met,
My lov'd companions, on a mournful buſineſs.
How painful 'tis to part from thoſe we love!

And

And yet we will not gratify our tyrants
With fruitleſs lamentation. Let us rather,
Fall'n as we are, inſtruct their pride, how much
We ſtill can ſoar above them. No misfortune
Can bow the firmneſs of a virtuous mind.

FIRST CAPTIVE.

Thy ſoul aſſumes new vigour from affliction.
Thy courage grows with danger; but not all
Are with ſuch conſtancy endu'd. Say, Princeſs,
How fares it with the loſt Polyxena?
Does not her meek and gentle temper ſhrink
At the near view of death?

CASSANDRA.

Not ſo, my friends;
The ſiſter of Caſſandra bears a ſpirit
Superior to her fate. When firſt Ulyſſes
Announc'd her ſentence, with unmoiſten'd eye
She ſtood, as if regardleſs of herſelf:
But when in frantic grief deſpairing Hecuba
Pour'd forth her wild laments, and curs'd her being,
Such was her filial virtue, with ſuch ſweetneſs
She ſtrove to ſooth her parent's ſtrong affliction,
That ev'n Ulyſſes ſoften'd at the ſight.

FIRST CAPTIVE.

Oh, that inexorable fate ſhould doom
Such excellence to an untimely grave!

CASSANDRA.

CASSANDRA.

That excellence had been unknown, if fortune
Had plac'd her in the beams of ſmooth proſperity.
Adverſity calls forth each latent virtue,
And ſhews the noble ſoul in all its luſtre.
Polyxena ſhall gain immortal fame;
Late time ſhall hear, and even foes applaud.
Oh! 'tis a ſweet reflection, in the hour
Of pain and ſorrow, though our mortal bodies
Are here expos'd to ev'ry wound and inſult
Cruelty can deviſe, and force inflict,
Yet there is that which mocks their utmoſt efforts,
That which the baſe and feeble may reſign,
But which no pow'r on earth can raviſh from us;
The freedom of the mind, our fame, our virtue.

FIRST CAPTIVE.

Oh could thy tongue, by ſentiments like theſe,
Teach the ſad Hecuba to bear with patience
Th' inevitable deſtiny of Heav'n!

CASSANDRA.

Alas! my friends, there only I am wretched:
My anxious heart bleeds at her ev'ry pang.
When life is ebbing faſt, exhauſted nature,
Of half her vigour robb'd, ſinks with her burthen.
The mind too, by the icy hand of age
Oppreſt, in vain ſtrives to exert her pow'rs.

But to what Heav'n ordains, we muſt ſubmit.
We cannot change th' eternal laws of fate.
The portion of misfortune they allot
To each, nor ſtrength, nor art, nor prudence,
Nor even virtue, can avail to ſhun.—
But lo! where moves in ſullen pomp along
The ſlow proceſſion. Lo! the ſpotleſs victim,
Pure as th' unſullied chaſtity of Heav'n.

FIRST CAPTIVE.

Flow, flow, my tears! Oh, ſuch a ſight as this
Would melt the coldeſt heart!

SECOND CAPTIVE.

Oh day of horror!
That brings the fulneſs of our miſery!

CASSANDRA.

Reſtrain, reſtrain your grief. As fierce a pang
Harrows my breaſt, as that which now you feel;
Yet will I not, with moſt untimely ſorrow,
Add to the horrors which ſurround my ſiſter.
I will not wound her ſoul, now wing'd for flight,
With the ſad proſpect of her friends' deſpair.
'Tis ours her drooping ſpirits to ſuſtain,
And guard her from the pangs of keen regret.

SCENE III.

CASSANDRA, CAPTIVES.

A proceſſion of prieſts, &c. leading POLYXENA *to ſacrifice, ſoldiers following. They advance towards the front of the ſtage.*

POLYXENA.

Ye miniſters of death, ſay, is it lawful,
Ere everlaſting darkneſs ſhade my eyes,
T' exchange ſome parting words with theſe my friends,
The lov'd companions of my better days,
Companions too, and partners in affliction?
This mercy only I implore. You wear
The ſhapes of men, nor are your boſoms harden'd
To every tender feeling.

FIRST GREEK.

Duty bids us
Perform our monarch's orders; but we bear
Hearts that can ſympathize with others' woe.
Princeſs, enjoy thy wiſh; and would to Heav'n
Our pity might recall the fatal ſentence!

POLYXENA.

I thank thee, ſoldier.

[*The* FIRST GREEK *ſigns to the prieſts and ſoldiers, who fall back.*

Is it thus, my friends,
With eyes that court the earth, and mournful silence,
You greet your once-beloved Polyxena?

FIRST CAPTIVE.

I cannot ſpeak to her; my heart's too full.
Oh, my lov'd miſtreſs!——

POLYXENA.

Your affliction melts me.
I thought that I had baniſh'd from my ſoul
My ſex's weakneſs; but your tears o'ercome
My firmeſt reſolution. Death appears
Array'd in terrors now. And can death be
So painful to the wretched? Oh, my friends!
Our frail and erring nature ſhrinks appall'd
From the beſt balm of woe. In the ſtill grave
No tyrant tortures, and no captive groans.

CAPTIVE.

The grave, alas! from our deſpairing eyes
Shall hide that form for ever.

POLYXENA.

Ceaſe, oh ceaſe
Theſe fond complaints. We ſoon ſhall meet again;
Shall meet to part no more, in happier climes,
Where Juſtice reigns, and ~~white-rob'd~~ with her Peace reſides,
Joys ever young, and unalloy'd by fear.

CASSANDRA.

Yes, beſt-lov'd maid! for worth like thine the Gods

Shall

Shall with new raptures gild Elyſian plains.
Oh, with what tranſport, in thoſe bliſsful ſeats,
Shall our congenial ſpirits meet again!
But we are deſtin'd, in this vale of ſorrow,
Still to drag on the burthen of our woes:
Thou ſoon ſhalt be at reſt.

POLYXENA.

Oh my Caſſandra,
That I am doom'd in early youth to periſh,
Moves not my tears. The pomp of ſacrifice,
Theſe guards, yon frowning prieſts, that knife, which ſoon
Shall drink my ſtreaming blood, appall not me;
I hail my wiſh'd deliverance. And yet
There is, Caſſandra, ſtill one anxious thought
That weighs upon my heart: I fear to name it:
My mother——

CASSANDRA.

Oh Polyxena! what words
Shall I employ to ſooth thy ſoul to peace?

POLYXENA.

Enough! You dare not ſpeak. 'Tis as I thought.
Now I indeed am wretched!

CASSANDRA.

Your impatience
Conceives me not aright. At firſt, indeed,

The

The tranſports of her grief were wild and vehement,
As when fierce tempeſts daſh the foaming Helleſpont
On the Sigean promontory's baſe;
But ſoon ſubſided. More compos'd at length,
She bears her fate in ſilent reſignation.

POLYXENA.

Oh, ye immortal Powers! in this hour
Of ſharp affliction, and ſevereſt trial,
Suſtain her drooping ſpirits!—I am now
Reſtor'd to peace, and without ſhrinking face
The king of terrors.—Soldiers, I am ready;
Lead on. Farewell for ever! My Caſſandra,
Once more farewell! I read thy thoughts, my ſiſter;
But be aſſur'd, Polyxena will never
Diſgrace the noble race from whence ſhe ſprung.—
Ah me! that well-known voice!——

HECUBA, *(behind the ſcenes.)*

Off! give me way;
I will not be detain'd.

POLYXENA.

Hide me, Caſſandra,
Oh hide me from her ſight! I cannot bear it.
My ſpirits fail, I faint——

CASSANDRA.

Oh, moſt unfortunate!

SCENE

SCENE IV.

CASSANDRA, POLYXENA, &c.

HECUBA.

HECUBA.

Where is my child? Oh lead me, lead me to her.
They ſhall not tear her from me. Ha! ſhe's pale,
Breathleſs, and motionleſs! Alas! ſhe's dead.
Oh bloody villains! you have been too quick.
But I will claſp her cold, cold breaſt to mine,
Print kiſſes on her lips, and never looſe
This laſt embrace, 'till we are join'd in death.
She moves! What miracle is this? What God
Reſtores my child? Oh unexpected bliſs!
Oh tranſport beyond utterance! Speak, Polyxena,
Oh ſpeak to me. Let my ſad ears once more
Be raviſh'd with the muſic of thy tongue.

POLYXENA.

Oh, Madam! I would anſwer you, but cannot.
My feeble ſpirits fled at your approach.
But I am bleſt, thus folded in thy arms;
Oh in this lov'd embrace let me expire!

HECUBA.

HECUBA.

Expire! Oh no, my daughter! thou ſhalt live,
Live long, to comfort my declining age,
And to be bleſt thyſelf.—Ha! what are theſe,
Theſe ſhapes of terror, whoſe ill-omen'd looks
Wither my ſpringing hopes? What mean theſe wreaths,
Yon white-rob'd prieſts, this dreadful preparation?
Oh horrible! A gloomy light breaks in,
And all my miſery ruſhes full upon me.
I ſtagger with the weight. And muſt ſhe die?
Oh my diſtracted heart! My child, my child!

FIRST GREEK.

Forgive us, Madam, what our office bids;
But the time fleets apace. The rites await you.

POLYXENA.

I come.

HECUBA.

And wilt thou leave me then for ever?
Ye barbarous men, will nothing move your pity?
Lo! I am proſtrate in the duſt before you,
A queen, whoſe pray'rs have many a captive Greek
Redeem'd from death, while Troy had yet a being.
Oh, I conjure you, by your wives, your children,
If you are fathers, you will pity me——

Now

Now by my hopes, they weep!—Look on this virgin,
Fair, guiltleſs, blooming in the ſpring of life,
Should ſhe be doom'd to periſh on the altar?
Murder'd in wanton cruelty? O think,
If ſuch a ſight as this can move your ſorrow,
Think what a parent ſuffers! You have not
Impenetrable hearts! oh ſave her, ſave her!

SCENE V.

ENTER ULYSSES.

ULYSSES.

How's this? Your lives ſhall anſwer this delay.
Have theſe vile women's tears ſubdu'd your ſpirits?
For this the king ſhall thank you. Slaves, diſpatch.

HECUBA.

Oh mercy, mercy! One ſhort moment yet,
But one ſhort moment grant!

ULYSSES.

Off! I am deaf
To all intreaty.—Bear her hence this inſtant.

HECUBA, *(embraces* POLYXENA.)

You ſhall not part us now.

ULYSSES.

Tear them aſunder.

HECUBA.

Barbarian! Monſter!

POLYXENA.

Oh, farewell for ever!

[*They force off* POLYXENA.

SCENE VI.

HECUBA, CASSANDRA, CAPTIVES.

HECUBA.

Earth, open, and receive me!

CASSANDRA.

Oh, my ſoul!
Yet, yet ſuſtain thy burthen.—Help, my friends.
So—let us gently raiſe her. Still ſhe breathes.
All-gracious Heav'n, incline thine eye of pity
Upon her ſtrong affliction! oh, reſtore her
To life and us!—How is it with you, Madam?

HECUBA.

Oh, my Caſſandra, this laſt blow o'erwhelms me.
At length my ſpirits fail, and life retires.
I faint, I go to join my murder'd child.
Th' irremeable road we'll tread together!

CASSANDRA.

Oh do not wound my ears with ſounds like theſe!
Let me not, in one miſerable hour,

Lament

Lament a ſiſter and a mother's fate.
My tears and pray'rs ſhall call down aid from Heaven.

HECUBA.

All aid is vain. I ſhall be ſoon at reſt.
That pang was death—The ſhades of night ſurround me.
I ſeek in vain to find thee—Oh!—I come,
I come, Polyxena!—oh!——— [*Dies.*

CAPTIVE.

In that ſigh
She breath'd her life.

CASSANDRA.

How long will angry Gods
With-hold our wiſh'd deliverance?—Oh Hecuba,
The period of thy woes is come at length.
Shall then thy virtues meet ſo harſh a doom,
While the proud ſons of violence and rapine
Share the beſt gifts of fortune?—Ha! what means
This ſudden tranſport? My full boſom heaves,
I burn with ſacred rage. What forms are theſe?
Lo! how they toſs their flaming brands. They are
The Pow'rs of Vengeance.

CAPTIVE.

How her frenzy glows!
Her eyes flaſh lightnings!

CASSANDRA.

CASSANDRA.

Ha! the veſſel bounds
O'er the black wave. Behold the deſtin'd port,
But fate denies the period of thy toils.
What now avails thy wiſdom? Canſt thou curb
The tempeſt's fury? What new perils riſe
In long ſucceſſion! Oh what widow'd years
Await Penelope!

CAPTIVE.

The righteous Gods
Denounce their vengeance on Ulyſſes!

CASSANDRA.

Ha!
The ſcene is chang'd. Are thoſe Mycenæ's tow'rs?
Mourn, mourn, thou haughty city. Lo! he comes,
The victor comes. Throw wide thy gates. Receive
The long triumphal pomp. What ſmiling form
Greets him with looks of love, and well-feign'd joy?
Lo! the bright palace of the race of Atreus;
And hark! the vaulted roof re-echoes, now,
With ſhrieks of lamentation and diſmay.
'Tis done! Lo! where th' adulteress graſps the ſteel
Stain'd with her huſband's blood. Polyxena,
Thou art reveng'd. The Gods, the Gods are juſt.

[*The ſcene ſhuts.*

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